

Getting to the Roots of Evaluation Capacity Building in the Global South: Multiple Streams Model to Frame the Agenda Status of Evaluation in Turkey

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Abstract: A growing body of research is investigating the mechanisms to develop evaluation capacity in the Global South, but relatively little attention has been given to an equally important question: Under what conditions does the need to conduct and use evaluations for national decision making become a high priority on the governmental agenda? This article utilizes [Kingdon's \(2003\)](#) Multiple Streams Model to understand when and how evaluation is pushed higher on the public policy agenda in the Global South by using Turkey as a country case. This article argues that evaluation capacity building in the developing world may not be successful unless evaluation is indigenously elevated as a prominent item on the government's agenda. Turkey's case demonstrates evaluation's fleeting agenda status because evaluation as a policy solution has not yet become joined to a real problem despite the opening of a brief window of opportunity.

Keywords: Evaluation capacity building, Global South, governmental agenda, multiple streams, Northern-based donor organizations

Résumé : Un nombre croissant de recherches se consacrent aux mécanismes visant à renforcer la capacité évaluative des pays du Sud. Cependant, on accorde encore peu d'attention à une question tout aussi importante : Qu'est-ce qui fait qu'il devient important, pour un gouvernement, de mener des évaluations et d'en tenir compte dans la gouverne nationale ? Le modèle d'analyse des courants multiples (multiple streams) de J. W. [Kingdon \(2003\)](#) nous permet d'analyser, en prenant le cas de la Turquie, quand et comment l'évaluation remonte dans l'échelle des priorités des gouvernements des pays du Sud. Cet article suggère que le renforcement des capacités en évaluation dans les pays en développement aura peu d'impact à moins que l'évaluation ne soit considérée absolument prioritaire par les autorités nationales. Le cas de la Turquie montre que la position instable de l'évaluation à l'agenda politique est due au fait qu'elle n'apparaît pas encore comme la solution politique à un problème réel, bien qu'une fenêtre d'opportunité politique ait été brièvement entrouverte.

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The cross-national transfer of evaluation systems and concepts is considered among the most significant changes affecting the future of evaluation practice (Smith et al., 2011). Scholars relate this transfer to the widely accepted assumption that evaluations provide decision makers with reliable information as to whether public programs and policies are worth the money they cost, whether they should be continued, and how they can be improved to meet societal needs (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2012), which may lead to effective and efficient use of scarce public resources (Weiss, 1998). They hypothesize that evaluations foster both learning and accountability in efforts to ameliorate human misery and promote social justice if integrated into the decision-making process (Mark, Henry, & Julnes, 2000). The supposition that evaluation has an intrinsic value and is essential in any society has therefore accelerated the cross-national transfer of evaluation systems and practice (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004).

The assumption that evaluation advances human betterment—and hence is needed everywhere—ultimately generated a desire in many Northern-based donor communities to promote evaluation as a decision-making tool. This has led to efforts to build evaluation capacity in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)—also known as the Global South or the developing world—where a culture of evaluation is historically missing (Carden&Alkin, 2012; Porter, 2013; Schwandt et al., 2013). The momentum for promoting evaluation as an internal governing tool in the Global South has reached a peak with the designation of 2015 as the International Year of Evaluation by EvalPartners—an international initiative to strengthen national evaluation capacities worldwide (<http://mymande.org/evalyear>). Although the empirical investigation of the impact of evaluation capacity building (ECB) in the developing world is largely missing in the literature, existing anecdotal evidence suggests that the donor community has helped demystify evaluation practice and establish evaluation as a necessary decision-making tool in many LMICs (Mackay, 2009).

While ECB is gaining political currency in the development landscape, a group of scholars have noted that governments in developing countries do not necessarily consider evaluation beneficial for their information needs. They propose that evaluation is still considered a donor-driven activity because ECB activities are designed mainly to evaluate development programs against criteria identified by donors to satisfy their own needs (Hay, 2010; Smith, 2012). Furubo, Rist, and Sandahl (2002) asserted that evaluation approaches and models were disseminated from the Northern-based large aid organizations and added,

Latecomers have adopted these ideas, perhaps to show that they also subscribe to the modern and rational public management school of thought. But the conclusion here is that adherence to these ideas in most cases has been mainly lip service. (p. 17)

Thus, some researchers problematized the dominance of Northern aid organizations in evaluation in the developing world and suggested that as long as these organizations are preeminent in driving the evaluation agenda, evaluation will remain weak in the Global South (Carden, 2007) and potentially exert colonizing privilege as well. Under this scenario, ECB is not likely to establish evaluation as a routine, internal part of decision-making processes among governing bodies. These researchers have ultimately called for an investigation of mechanisms and implications of ECB in the Global South (Carden, 2010; Tarsilla, 2012).

This article investigates the need for evaluation in the Global South using Kingdon's (2003) Multiple Streams Model (also called Agenda Setting Theory) based on the case of contemporary Turkey. I argue that ECB may be needed in the Global South, but before this can be accomplished, the need for evaluation should first rise indigenously on the national agenda. Agenda Setting Theory helps situate this need in the historical and political context of a developing country isolated from Northern metanarratives. The application of Kingdon's model to Turkey provides an explanation for evaluation's failure to achieve agenda status despite a brief window of opportunity created by a recent shift in the national mood. In the case of Turkey, a massive problem stream disabled the coupling of evaluation to a specific problem despite the politically favourable atmosphere, and prematurely ended the opportunity for evaluation to indigenously rise on the agenda.

The purpose of this article is to propose a conceptual framework to explore the need for evaluation, which then could be followed by building evaluation capacity, in the Global South. This article advances the literature on ECB and the global expansion of our practice by applying an underutilized political science theory to an underinvestigated country in our field. In doing so, the article is organized in three sections. First, I provide a brief background on the rhetoric of ECB in the Global South, promulgating the assumption that evaluation is essential in every society. Second, I use Kingdon's (2003) theory to frame the agenda status of—need for—evaluation in the global South. In the third section, I apply Kingdon's model to inform our understanding of the rise and fall of evaluation as the focus of the government's attention in Turkey and problematize the success of ECB in the country. The article concludes with a discussion of the significance of the national political context in the global expansion of our profession.

THE RHETORIC OF ECB IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The rise and fall of evaluation in governmental affairs in LMICs is aligned with ECB efforts orchestrated by Northern-based aid organizations (Carden & Alkin, 2012). ECB in the Global South over the past few decades has occurred largely in response to a growing public concern for aid effectiveness and use of taxpayer money (OECD, 2010). When the Paris Declaration of 2005 strictly emphasized mutual accountability for effective development results and efficient use of funds, evaluation resurfaced as a powerful tool. The momentum to build and strengthen evaluation capacity in partnership with developing countries has since reached

an all-time peak (Segone, 2008). Although the Declaration demanded national ownership of evaluation systems and practice for in-country decision making, the primary responsibility to put evaluation on the decision agenda has still rested with the Northern-based donor organizations due to their financial and technical capacity (Dabelstein, 2003). They are understood to drive the agenda for evaluation in LMICs to fulfill the commitment made in Paris (Picciotto, 2003).

Existing accounts of ECB efforts in LMICs establish three main premises that underpin the Northern-aid organizations' approach to promote evaluation as a decision-making tool. First, these organizations attach evaluation to evidence-based decision making, which is believed to contribute to good governance, and to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Segone, 2009; World Bank, 2004) and now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The argument is made that improved monitoring and evaluation capacity will improve efficiency and effectiveness of public policies by providing policymakers with technically sound and relevant evidence—ideally and epistemologically objective, credible, and quantitative (Mackay, 2009; Segone, Sakvarelidze, & Vadnais, 2009; cf. Hopson et al., 2012). Second, despite the conceptual pluralism in what constitutes evaluation capacity at a country level (Rist, Boily, & Martin, 2011), the Northern-donor community proposes a supply and demand model to promoting evaluation. They assume that demand is generated by existing evaluation cultures at national ministries and the presence, if any, of national evaluation associations, incentives, external mandates, and leadership (Holvoet & Dewachter, 2013; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2010). On the supply side, they seem to focus on knowledge management systems, evaluation tools, models, techniques, training and formal education opportunities, as well as funding and evaluation standards (Mackay, 2009; Rist et al., 2011). Last but not least, a review of the ECB literature suggests that Northern-based organizations tend to strategically involve partner country representatives in the process to increase ownership and utilization of evaluation evidence in national decision making (Estrella et al., 2000; Segone, 2009). Guided by these premises, aid organizations' control of the evaluation agenda—hence ECB in LMICs—remains largely intact.

Despite donors' continued efforts, existing literature reveals questions about Northern donors' success in integrating evaluation systems into mainstream governmental decision domains in the Global South (Carden, 2007; World Bank, 2004). On the one hand, aid organizations identify in-country limitations as a challenge in transferring evaluation systems and practice to LMICs. From their frame of reference, limitations include inadequate in-country demand (and need) for evaluations; resistance to results-based management in governments; lack of a legal framework and technical skills to support evaluation systems; and recognition of evaluation as a professional career (Mackay, 2002). On the other hand, critical researchers propose that imposition of donor values and control in the field of evaluation is indeed to blame (Hay, 2010; Schwandt et al., 2013). These scholars argue that aid organizations reinforce one-sided accountability, which confines evaluation systems and practice into the finance sector and budgeting

initiatives, thus preventing evaluation systems from permeating the entirety of political culture (Kumar, 2010; Schiavo-Campo, 2005). Donor organizations are often criticized for focusing more on accountability rather than learning and evaluation in the Global South (Patton, 2012). Moreover, their attempt at stakeholder engagement is considered insufficient to remedy the lack of in-country demand to utilize evaluations for national decision making (OECD, 2010). Scholars contend, as a result, that evaluation's status on the national agendas of many LMICs has been stagnant (Hay, 2010).

The stagnant state of evaluation in governmental affairs outside of the Global Northern context invited many researchers to problematize the involvement of donor organizations in the field. They question whose interests are being served by particular evaluation agendas, models, and questions (Hopson, Kirkhart, & Bledsoe, 2012; Schwandt et al., 2013; Sridharan & De Silva, 2010). According to some, Northern-driven ECB has been merely a technical transfer and thus inadequate to remedy the weak demand for public sector evaluations in the developing world (Carden, 2007). Hay (2010) argues that the enthusiasm among donors for building evaluation capacity indeed “camouflages . . . the declining or stagnant state of evaluation in South Asia” (p. 223). Scholars also caution that nationals of developing countries might view evaluation as a Western or imperialist notion that subjugates and marginalizes local knowledge and styles of decision making (Bhola, 2003; Smith, 2012). Thus, they advocate for eliminating the monopoly of Western institutions and values over the field in LMICs and promote testing all evaluation models based on national information needs so that evaluations can meaningfully contribute to national decision making (Schwandt et al., 2013), if that.

As a solution, these critical scholars support the evolution of Indigenous evaluation cultures and capabilities by and for the developing country nationals—when and if they need it—to self-determine their understanding of social problems, responses, and ways to create useful knowledge that will contribute to the country's own decision making and social problem solving (Kawakami et al., 2008; Smith, 2012). By indigenous, researchers mean “evaluators in different countries around the world [who] are developing their own [evaluation] infrastructures to support their endeavors as well as their own preferred theoretical and methodological approaches” (Chelimsky & Shadish, 1997, p. xii). Per this definition, the scholars call for responsiveness to the historical, political, and cultural context of the country and welcome reconceptualization of evaluation need and capacity, and its valued purposes within that context (Hay, 2010).

Although the available research is growing in both volume and importance, indigenous evaluation systems and practice in the developing country context is a relatively new phenomenon (Carden & Alkin, 2012). It is well understood why national governments have the right to self-determine their need for evaluation and eventually grow an indigenous evaluation philosophy grounded in their unique context. Yet, what remains unclear is how evaluation might rise to a level of serious consideration on their agenda in the first place. Under what circumstances does the need to conduct and use evaluations become a high priority for

national policymakers? What are the lessons from country cases? Despite two decades of literature on evaluation in LMICs, little is known about the answers to these questions.

KINGDON'S MULTIPLE STREAMS MODEL

Kingdon's model is immediately relevant and useful here for understanding how evaluation (and need thereof) rises on a national agenda because it provides a foundation for the premises of indigenous evaluation systems and practice in the global South. Since it was first published in 1984, Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* has set a precedent for understanding and exploring government agenda setting. Kingdon was motivated by a single question: Why do policy issues to which decision makers pay serious attention become issues in the first place while others never make it to the agenda? Following Kingdon's lead, this article will dwell at length on the question: When does the need for evaluation become a high priority on the governmental agenda? For an item to rise on the agenda, Kingdon argues that three streams—or processes—of agenda setting must converge: the problem, policy, and political streams. These are fully explained in the context of Turkey in the following sections of the article.

Problem stream. The *problem stream* concerns the process of recognizing and defining a policy problem. Kingdon argues that systematic data and pervasive indicators, existing feedback mechanisms, and focusing events might transform a mere condition into a recognized problem by policymakers. However, Kingdon cautions that problem recognition by policy makers does not guarantee its appearance on a government agenda. For a problem to be placed on the agenda, it needs to be important and real, and there should be a widespread impulse among the public as well as decision makers to take action to reverse the situation. Having said that, Kingdon recognizes that problems are interpretative in nature, involving value judgements and representing different perceptions of reality across individuals and societal groups. Alternatively, a problem might fade from government view due to a lack of sufficient and timely government action, public frustration with the policymaking process, and lack of issue novelty.

Policy stream. The *policy stream* refers to the process of proposing, discussing, drafting, modifying, and developing policy solutions and alternatives. These alternatives are developed in policy communities consisting of specialists, researchers, consultants, and analysts in a given public policy area within and outside of government. To Kingdon, policy ideas and alternatives are significant in agenda setting because recognition of a pressing problem is not enough; policymakers also need to know what to do about them. Policy entrepreneurs, who are people committing resources for their pet proposals to get accepted, work to educate the general public and policymakers about their ideas and build momentum for their acceptance. This is a necessary investment so that when a window of opportunity presents itself, policymakers will be more likely to adopt these entrepreneurs' proposals, as they are already accustomed to them.

Political stream. The *political stream* refers to political events and factors such as “public mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological distributions in Congress, and changes of administration” (Kingdon, 2003, p. 145). These events create a unique atmosphere that alters policymakers’ attention span and level of acceptance or resistance toward a range of policy ideas. Events in the political stream may signal the need to attend to a problem and focus policymakers’ attention on some particular subjects. In this stream, the governing paradigm to build consensus is bargaining. Once bargaining is over and consensus is achieved, adopting particular items spreads rather quickly among policymakers.

The significance of Kingdon’s theory (2003) resides in the argument that “none of the streams are sufficient by themselves to place an item firmly on the decision agenda” (p. 178). Since they do not follow one another in a regular and rational pattern, they must simultaneously converge at a window of opportunity, which moves an item higher on the agenda. Indeed, policy entrepreneurs—as central actors with their pet proposals at the ready—conjoin or “couple” these streams at an open window whereby their proposal gains the best of chance of coming to real action. According to Kingdon, windows open for a short period in either the political stream or the problem stream. These windows open mostly in unpredictable ways, as their presence or absence depends on participants’ (public, policy entrepreneurs, and policymakers) perceptions of problems and political events. If one of the streams is missing, the agenda status of a subject or an item will be fleeting.

Kingdon’s theory is applicable to our topic as it highlights the influence of political, historical, and sociocultural context (e.g., policy actors, definitions of national problems, available policy alternatives, political atmosphere) on identifying topics of national discussion, which the traditional ECB approach, whereby evaluation is by default considered as an essential tool, tends to overlook. The model also alerts us to the limited ability of any government to systematically conduct and directly utilize evaluations for their decision making as intended and prescribed by Northern donors. It instead proposes that the governing paradigm of governmental processes (i.e., agenda setting and policymaking) is not a rational-comprehensive model operating in isolation from the context of problems, policy alternatives, and political events. Instead it invites us to investigate if, why, and how national policymakers in the developing country (should) pay serious attention to a need for evaluation in the first place. Kingdon (2003) helps us decipher these streams under which evaluation might rise on the national agenda before evaluation capacity can be successfully built.

AGENDA STATUS OF EVALUATION IN TURKEY

Turkey’s geopolitical position between the Global North and South provides a unique testing ground for addressing the rise and fall of evaluation on the governmental agenda through Kingdon’s model. Turkey is on the brink of a significant political renewal that provides ample opportunity to broaden our scholarly references in the field of evaluation. The country has recorded major social and human

development since the 2001 national financial crisis and the 2008 global economic slowdown (Kim, 2013) and is becoming increasingly “prosperous and influential in regional and global affairs” (Bechev, 2011, p. 5). The country’s significant and controversial pro-market political change over the past two decades illustrates the convergence (or lack thereof) of the streams of problem, policy, and politics proposed by Kingdon as necessary for focusing the government’s attention on evaluation as a solution to pressing problems, mostly related to decision-making practices.

The literature on existing evaluation systems and practice in Turkey is extremely sparse (for an exception see Cakici, 2014) and suffers from the same problem as the general literature on evaluation in the Global South. Of the reports that do exist, most are anecdotal in nature and provided by Northern-based aid organizations (e.g., Russon & Russon, 2000). Yet a careful review of available policy documents and nongovernmental reports reveals how fleetingly the nature of evaluation has been the focus of attention in Turkish governmental affairs. In light of Kingdon’s model, Turkey’s case demonstrates how evaluation as a policy solution has not become joined to a real problem despite the opening of a brief window of opportunity provided by political unrest and widespread voicing of political dissent in Turkey.

While the political stream provided support for introducing more transparency and accountability into governmental decision making in Turkey, and evaluation has been floating about in the policy stream as a compelling tool—thanks to targeted ECB efforts in line ministries across the government—a massive problem stream disabled the complete coupling of these streams. As a result of this failure of convergence, Turkey has not fully integrated evaluation practice into its policy life cycle (Aydagül, 2008; Cakici, 2014; Murphy & Sazak, 2012; Sisman, 2012).

Political stream. A brief window—originating in the political stream—opened for policy advocates to advance their pet proposals, including evaluation, due to a dramatic change in the national mood. From late May until early July 2013, Turkey was stormed by mass public demonstrations incited by a redevelopment project proposed by the single-ruling party (the Justice and Development Party, also known the AK Party government) for the Gezi Park—one of the last remaining green spaces in downtown Istanbul. Starting out as an environmental protest, the events soon accelerated into an anti-government demonstration. Despite its brief lifespan, the Gezi movement’s power to cultivate fertile ground for new political possibilities has been widely recognized both in and outside of the government (Bilgic & Kafkasli, 2013; Ete & Tastan, 2013; Kirisci, 2013). Pointing to the movement’s novelty in changing national mindset, Nilufer Gole, a renowned Turkish sociologist, wrote:

The future of Turkish democracy resides in the credo of this movement, which asks that those in power hold their tongues, abstain from moral intrusion and ban violence. The Gezi movement is reuniting people across ancient divides by rejecting the politics of polarization and stigmatization. (2013, p. 14)

Although different researchers framed this civilian movement with international reach using different terminology, such as *Turkish Spring* or a countrywide cry for

legitimacy (Altinkas, 2013), they all highlighted its power to transform ways of thinking about governmental processes.

Although the detailed implications of Gezi protests for politics and society in Turkey are only beginning to appear in the literature, numerous scholars have suggested that this broad civilian movement signifies the change in national mood concerning the AK Party government's style of governance. The single-party government is believed to have painstakingly yet rapidly transformed Turkey into a neoliberal society through hyper-development projects since they came to power in 2002 (Gole, 2013). While some have argued that these projects signify Turkey's developmental progress, others have criticized them for destroying natural and cultural spaces in return for profit (Van Pampus, 2013). The AK Party's so-called authoritarian discourse in planning and programming under the leadership of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan may be the basis for criticisms against these development projects and other policies that ultimately triggered the protests (Atay, 2013). Two of the most recent studies have provided strong empirical support for this contention, exploring activists' motivation to participate in the movement and their demands from the government (Ete & Tastan, 2013; KONDA, 2014). A common finding of these studies was that the protestors decided to participate in the movement mostly to voice their opposition to the AK Party government's authoritarian governance style that interferes with personal liberties (KONDA, 2014; Tastan, 2013). Other respondents criticized the current government's lack of consultation with civil society (Bilgic & Kafkasli, 2013). Summarizing protestors' demands, Gole writes (2013), "Enjoying a majority rule with no real opposition, Erdogan has not hesitated to make major decisions himself without deigning to consult those primarily concerned—the citizens—nor his political entourage" (p. 13). As a result, the Gezi movement unearthed the shift in climate, a swing in national mood regarding the governmental processes.

In line with Kingdon's theory, this broad anti-government mood indeed opened a favourable window for creating receptivity toward certain topics of contention, one of which was inherently related to evaluation. The civilian movement demanded a response from the AK Party government to certain questions: What does the redevelopment project propose? How do the city residents feel about it? What is the projected impact? Will residents' lives improve because of redevelopment? Was the process of project development equitable? Some of these questions were descriptive and some were normative, yet all are evaluative in nature. As a prominent event in the political stream, the Gezi movement has signalled an opportunity for Turkish and international policy entrepreneurs to elevate evaluation on the governmental agenda. This was a favourable situation because these entrepreneurs in the policy stream have been very active in meticulously paving the way to highlight the urgent need for evaluations and increase policymakers' acceptance of evaluation as a governmental tool.

Policy stream. Following Kingdon's lead, it is safe to argue that Turkish policymakers have already developed some receptivity to evaluation as a policy proposal thanks to financial and technical investment often provided by the

Northern-development partners. As discussed before, the momentum for promoting good governance, currently regarded as key to successful economic and social development in the Global South, has pressured countries to undertake performance and outcome assessments of national initiatives sponsored by development aid. Official development assistance (ODA) has long contributed to Turkey's booming free-market economy—accompanied by a democratic, secular, republican regime—since the 1960s. Providers of ODA have included individual countries such as the United States and Germany, as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IRDB) (Murphy & Szak, 2012). In return, international aid has demanded that Turkey participate in rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) efforts to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency. These efforts have informed and framed the conceptual and practical grounding of evaluation in the country (e.g., OECD, 2005; UNDP, 2011; World Bank, 2011). As a part of the policy community in Turkey, Northern donors invested their resources to soften the process of adopting evaluation as a solution to governmental problems in Turkey largely through evaluations of development programs.

The passage of Public Financial Management and Control Law (PFMC) No. 5018 (Official Gazette, December 2003, No. 25326) prompted the initial receptivity toward integrating evaluation into decision domains in Turkey. In parallel with efforts to fully integrate its members, the European Union (EU) was the driving force behind Law No. 5018 by demanding public management reform in Turkey featuring result orientation, accountability, and transparency. The law mandates that every public institution in the country develop and implement a multiyear strategic plan that must include a clear vision and mission, measurable objectives, and specific goals to ensure efficient and effective resource allocation in accordance with national development plans. The obligation to plan strategically gave rise to the opening of strategic planning departments in almost every line ministry, the establishment of monitoring and evaluation departments at the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and the Department of Governance and Strategic Management at the Ministry of Development (Cakici, 2014). Although the law strictly associates evaluation with internal control, audit, and performance-based budgeting (see Yenice, 2006), it has set a precedent in Turkish governmental life by envisioning the need to install evaluation systems—albeit in a narrowed sense of internal control—in governmental departments (see European Commission, 2010).

To facilitate compliance with Law No. 5018, the Turkish government has undertaken several additional capacity-building efforts at line ministries in partnership with national nongovernmental organizations and international donors. These efforts have been supported by ongoing financial support from the EU and other development partners. The EU's Strengthening the Capacity of the Ministry of National Education Project has been an influential project in this sense. Decree No. 652, which officially established the first M&E units in MoNE's history, was conceptually grounded in the Green Paper based on this project's findings. Also among these was a project called Monitoring and Evaluation for Development

Programs (MEDP), implemented by the Ministry of Development (MoD) and supported by the World Bank in 2007–2010 (European Commission, 2010). The project was initiated to build and strengthen the elements of results-based management (IRBM) and citizen responsiveness to be incorporated into the 10th National Development Plan (Stout, 2010). The project—initially targeting the health, environment, and transportation sectors—aimed at improving national decision making with policy directions and program adjustments based on monitoring and evaluation data. As part of the project activities, World Bank consultants provided a workshop—“M&E for Policy Formulation and as an Integral Part of Government Institutions”—to 20 bureaucrats at the MoD and pilot institutions (Ilgin, 2010). In addition, the World Bank’s *10 Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System* by Kusek and Rist (2004) was translated into Turkish (Ilgin, 2010). Although this project originally targeted national decision making, evaluation systems in Turkey have been envisioned to assist with the macro development results framework (MDRF)—a conceptual and practical management tool widely used by the Northern aid organizations to deliver and coordinate development assistance (Stout & Rassapan, 2010).

Despite Turkish policymakers’ relative receptivity toward evaluation, evaluation’s establishment as a viable policy tool to improve decision making has been significantly limited. Kingdon (2003) argues that it takes considerable time for governments to act on proposed ideas. If this is the case, new ideas need to circulate long enough to rise to a level of serious consideration when the window opens. Despite the longevity of evaluation’s circulation as a policy tool by donors, a significant challenge remains to its survival in the country. Several elements of supply for evaluation capacity already exist in the country (e.g., a long-standing national planning framework, Law No. 5018 as the legal framework for performance management, TurkSTAT as the central database management, the opening of strategic development units at line ministries, and initiation of e-government infrastructure) (Cakici, 2014; Stout, 2010). Yet available evidence suggests that there have been neither systematic mechanisms nor an established mentality to necessitate and conduct formal policy or program evaluations due to a perceived lack of awareness of the value of evaluation for governmental decisions (Cakici, 2014). An internal study by the Ministry of National Education found that ministry bureaucrats believe strategic planning, monitoring, and evaluation are new concepts with which the Turkish governance does not have a long history (Turk, Yalcin, & Unsal, 2006). It is argued that Turkey’s quest to modernize and westernize has resulted in it embracing many concepts, ideas, and processes from other countries, including evaluation, which is inherently a Western concept and tool that Turkey appropriated in her efforts to be a global player (Cakici, 2014). The concept of evaluation was sporadically borrowed without understanding the context within which it was developed; thus, its value as a policy solution in the Turkish governmental arena has been justifiably limited.

In sum, evaluation has already been circulated as a policy alternative in and around government to reform decision-making practices in Turkey, although its

survival is still being tested. During and in the aftermath of the Gezi movement, the government's attention span significantly shifted, which created an opportunity for action to push evaluation higher on the decision-making agenda. Yet a massive problem stream halted the convergence of all streams when the brief opening window demanded a relatively quick response.

Problem stream. The biggest obstacle standing in the way of Turkish policy entrepreneurs pushing evaluation through the window of opportunity cracked open by the Gezi movement was the overwhelming array of problems at hand. Simply put, the range of problems in Turkey looked more like an ocean rather than a stream.

According to [Kingdon \(2003\)](#), a problem comes to the attention of policy makers through three channels: indicators, a focusing event, and feedback. Yet problem statements embrace different meanings because they are value-laden and they welcome multiple interpretations. This explanation fits well with the situation in Turkey. Ever since the AK Party came to power, numerous scholars and thought leaders have cited pervasive indicators demonstrating the magnitude and nature of a wide range of problems. Increased income inequality ([Raufoglu, 2010](#)), an educational gap across socioeconomic, gender, and ethnic lines ([Education Reform Initiative, 2014](#)), lack of freedom of speech and press, and lack of recognition of minority rights are a few of these problems ([Research Turkey, 2012](#)).

Later, the Gezi movement's crisis language acted as a focusing event that redirected everyone's attention to another range of problems. Although there was a widespread impulse to change these conditions, the conceptualization of problem(s) differed widely. Some agreed with the *Economist's* claim that "The real lesson of these events is about authoritarianism: Turkey will not put up with a middle-class democrat behaving like an Ottoman sultan" ("[Turkey's Troubles](#)," [2013](#)), depicting Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan in a sultan's robe holding a tear-gas mask. Echoing these lines, Tayfun Atay, a Turkish professor of social anthropology, argued, "the vacuum of authoritarianism left by the military bureaucracy seemed to be filled by the AK Party cadres—essentially the Party replaced the military!" (2013, p. 40). Some have pointed to the polarization between religious and secular groups as the core problem ([Azak, 2013](#)), while others emphasized the lack of internationalization of democracy in Turkey ([Fourest, 2013](#)). This wide range of problems in the aftermath of Gezi protests, as Kingdon rightly cautions, has blocked the window to put certain items under the spotlight.

[Kingdon \(2003\)](#) argues that a fragmented policy community may preclude the development of a common paradigm and language to understand and discuss policy problems and thus may abruptly change the focus of agenda setting. Consistent with Kingdon's understanding, the AK Party government's attention has been demanded and has refocused on multiple fronts. As a result, it announced the so-called "democratization package" in September 2013 as a one-stop solution to the wide-ranging problems faced by the government and the people. The package included such items as the removal of the longstanding 10% electoral threshold, the right to political campaigning in the mother tongue, the removal of the head scarf ban for public servants working in public institutions, and fighting against

hate crimes and discrimination ([Hayatsever, 2013](#)). The package deal fell short of addressing the concerns about decision-making practices, for which international donor partners have long presented evaluation as a viable solution. In the end, Kingdon's theory helps explain that the polarization across the identification, recognition, and definition of problems in Turkey is the reason that some items rose on the agenda while others—including the need for evaluation systems to be integrated into decision-making structures—were precluded from being pushed higher.

To sum up, the window opened for a short period in Turkey when many advocates bombarded the political deliberations with their conceptions of problems and a plethora of solutions, exhausting the window's capacity to manage. As Kingdon put it, "The subject *was* too complex, the problems too numerous, and the array of alternatives too overwhelming" (2003, p. 178). The window eventually closed without coupling the problem stream to the policy and political streams. Since evaluation has not organically risen on the Turkish decision agenda as a compelling policy alternative, it is safe to argue that ongoing efforts to build evaluation capacity in Turkey by donor organizations will not succeed in fully integrating evaluation into decision-making practices.

CONCLUSION

In addressing the question of when the need for evaluation becomes a high priority on a governmental agenda, this article critiqued the foundational premise of widespread approaches to evaluation capacity building in low- and middle-income countries; that is, evaluation is, by default, a valued commodity at both domestic and international levels ([Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009](#)), and therefore capacity for conducting and using evaluations should be developed and strengthened. It was argued that ECB in the Global South, orchestrated by large, multilateral or bilateral donor organizations, may fail to expand the field of evaluation to contexts where the practice is historically missing as long as the need for evaluation does not rise on a government's agenda organically or indigenously in response to national dynamics.

To illustrate this, the article benefited from the unique yet underutilized case of Turkey where evaluation has yet to be integrated as a form of inquiry into decision-making practices despite the targeted capacity development efforts provided by Turkey's donor partners over the years. The explanation for the lack of interest in and lack of institutionalization of evaluation function in Turkey's governmental circles was hinted at in the argument that agenda setting is a highly context-dependent, complex challenge. With this argument in mind, this article built on the work of [Kingdon's \(2003\)](#) Multiple Streams Model as a conceptual framework to explore the rise and fall of evaluation on Turkey's agenda. A recent countrywide demonstration, known as the Gezi movement, refocused the single-party government's attention on particular agenda items and gave rise to several policy alternatives, including evaluation, as solutions to a wide range of national problems. Evaluation did not rise to a level of serious consideration at that time, however, due to a lack of coupling,

as Kingdon would argue, which largely defeats the purpose of ongoing evaluation capacity building efforts by Turkey's international donor partners.

Kingdon's theory invites evaluators to be more cognizant about the country context (political, historical, cultural, economic, etc.) as they engage with ECB in settings outside of the Global North. Evaluation scholars have long argued that context plays an essential role in grounding and validating the concept of evaluation in a particular setting for a particular group of people, as well as the ways in which it can be conducted and used (Conner, Fitzpatrick, & Rog, 2012; SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004). They assert that evaluation is a social intervention and that its reality is produced in politically, culturally, socially, and historically situated contexts (Hood, Hopson, & Frierson, 2005; LaFrance & Nichols, 2008; Mertens, 2008; Smith, 2012). As a result, it is suggested that evaluators "decolonize" evaluation (Hopson, Kirkhart, & Bledsoe, 2012). Using Kingdon's theory, this article contributes to the quest for decolonization by arguing that governments, as in the case of Turkey, should determine their need for evaluation without it being imposed from outside or encouraged by invitation, well before discussing the kinds of evaluation systems they desire to establish and the capacity gaps they should address. This need, as illustrated by the Agenda Setting Theory, is the byproduct of contextual dynamics strategically aligned at a window of opportunity.

As opposed to self-determination, essentializing evaluation concept and practice advances colonizing practices that dominate the governmental discourse of developing countries in a particular way but are not, rightfully, fully bought into. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith (2012) pointed to this overall essentialist tone in Western research and its cognate field of evaluation:

Research "through imperial eyes" describes an approach which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life, and of human beings. It is an approach to indigenous peoples which still conveys a sense of innate superiority and an overabundance of desire to bring progress into the lives of indigenous peoples—spiritually, intellectually, socially, and economically. (p. 58)

While the International Year of Evaluation has accelerated the desire to transfer evaluation concepts and systems into unadulterated contexts, the challenging question of whether and why evaluation is needed in a low- and middle-income country should merit serious attention.

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